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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000041

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BAGHDAD FOR POL, NCT, USAID, ROL COODINATOR

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SUBJECT: OUTGOING TNA MEMBER ON IRAQ'S FUTURE

CLASSIFIED BY: Scott Dean, Regional Coordinator (Acting), Reo Kirkuk, Department of State .

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) This is a SET Tikrit cable.

SUMMARY

¶2. (C) The Tikrit SET Officer and 101 AASLT Deputy G-9 met with outgoing Transitional National Assembly (TNA) member, Hatem Mukhls, on 9 February. Mukhls said few candidates in the December elections understood voters. He sees rising sectarianism and widespread fear of men in uniform. He also complained the current Provincial Council in Salah Ad Din (SaD) was not working well.

LOOKING BACK

¶3. (C) On February 9th, SET Tikrit and 101 AASALT Deputy G-9 met with Hatem Mukhls of Tikrit. As an outgoing member of the Transitional National Assembly, he spoke about changes needed in the Province of Salah Ad Din. He said he felt very confident during his December re-election campaign when his poll workers told him his party would win 175,000 votes nationwide. He was disappointed to see it reach barely 10,000 votes across 15 provinces; however, he cannot account for the difference. More importantly, he said all candidates who ran can not have a good understanding of their constituents, because they don't really know who did and did not vote for them. In speaking about this, he was very matter-of-fact. When SET Officer asked about the impact of the election problems, Mukhls said the elections were very good, even considering the problems which occurred.

¶4. (C) Mukhls said that Iraq had never been as sectarian as it was today. Instead of people being elected for their capabilities, they were elected based on their religious beliefs. As a medical doctor, who spent over 20 years in upstate NY, he related this to doctors. He is trying to rebuild the doctors' union; so doctors can become accredited by their training and abilities, rather than their religion. He feels this will be a huge help to the career field. He saw the same sectarianism in the government, where MOI and MOD troops killed Iraqis every day, based on religion. In fact, he said, throughout Iraq, the citizens were afraid of men in uniforms. Every newspaper carried an account of people taken from their

homes by uniformed men and found tortured and/or dead; it was no wonder they didn't trust the police, and would not turn information over to them, he said.

VIEW OF THE SaD PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

15. (C) Like many other leaders in the area, Mukls believes the Salah ad Din Provincial Council is doing a poor job. He said most people he knew agreed. Most of their opinion was based on the fact that 15 of the 42 members were from the Tozhurmato area, south of Kirkuk: they didn't represent the average person in SaD. He said they were unwilling to try new ideas, they still felt that the situation was the same as when Saddam was in power, when no good deed went unpunished. He feels people may not know how to use initiative, or may not be willing to do so.

COMMENT

17. (C) Mukhls is very well known in the Salah Ad Din area. He has many interests, and although he would have liked to have been in the new Iraqi Government, he will still be very busy. He feels strongly Iraq must be a united country, and is willing to work hard for it. We expect to see much more of him as the years go by, and expect he will be willing to help the Coalition Forces help Iraq.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

18. (SBU) Hatem Mukhls is an AmCit from Tikrit, where his family
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is well known. He said his grandfather, Hussein Mukhls, was the person who pushed the city of Tikrit to grow in the 1930's. His grave is in Tikrit; Saddam Hussein changed the walls of the palace area (former FOB Danger) to accommodate the grave. Mukhls left Iraq in 1981 for the U.S. His father and brother were killed by Saddam Hussein in 1993, after a failed coups attempt. He became a medical doctor in upstate NY, specializing in surgery and emergency medicine. He returned to Iraq in 2003, coming across the Western border with U.S. troops, helping clinics rebuild as he returned to Tikrit. He owns a newspaper and a printing company. His passion now is improving conditions in Salah Ad Din for handicapped citizens, and he envisions rebuilding a former Tikrit village for handicapped citizens and their families. His family remains in the U.S. He has a college-aged son, and a 14-year-old son.

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